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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 005117

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TAL AFAR BATTLE: GOT VOICES CONCERNS REGARDING  
ETHNIC BALANCE AND TURKISH POPULAR OPINION

REF: ANKARA 5100

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Ambassador spoke with MFA Undersecretary-designate Ali Tuygan afternoon of Sept 10 to provide him with more detail on the situation in Tal Afar based on LNO reporting. Amb. stressed that the Turkish message on the need for discriminate use of force and protection of civilians had registered with Washington and that Task Force Olympia was attempting to do just that in its efforts to eliminate a large group of insurgents operating in Tal Afar. U/S Tuygan expressed appreciation for the information provided. He said that the Turkish concern was that Tal Afar had been a relatively peaceful place and that the Turkmen had attempted to stay out of the conflicts that raged in other parts of Iraq. He could not say with assurance where the insurgents had come from but he was certain that they had imposed themselves on the local population. MFA was concerned that if there was a prolonged use of indiscriminate force with lots of collateral damage and injuries to the civilian population this would have the effect of increasing support for the insurgents. Ambassador assured Tuygan that eyewitness reports from the U.S. LNO suggested great care was being taken to limit damage and prevent civilian casualties. So far, TFO believed all KIA were insurgent fighters but was seeking confirmation via the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

12. (C) Tuygan picked up on this point and said the composition of the ISF was important. Ambassador confirmed that many in the Iraqi National Guard units that were involved were former peshmerga but they were operating with MNF TFO and reported to Baghdad. Tuygan said that the Turkish concern was that they might try to take advantage of the situation to change the demographic balance of Tal Afar as Kurds were attempting to do in Kirkuk. Ambassador stressed that the TFO operation was targeting insurgents, some of whom were Turkmen, but not targeting Turkmen citizens or forces. There was no effort underway to change the demographic balance in Tal Afar. Tuygan stressed the sensitivity of interethnic relations in Tal Afar and said the appearance of such an effort "could ignite internal strife." It would also, he said, create a difficult situation for Turkey. The GOT would be accused in the press of providing logistical support for U.S. and Kurdish efforts to eliminate the Turkmen population. "If things got out of hand" Turkey would be forced to react. "We have absolutely no intention of sending in our own forces but we might have to take steps that would impact our cooperation in Iraq."

13. (C) Ambassador reiterated that operations were ongoing and there would no doubt be rumors and exaggerated reports. He urged Tuygan to be in touch directly if reports reached MFA that gave the GOT cause for concern. It was important to ascertain the facts on the ground before reacting. Tuygan agreed and promised to be in touch.

14. (C) COMMENT: Tuygan was extremely appreciative of the information he received and was much calmer today than he was yesterday evening. That being said the continued sensitivity of the subject is reflected by the statements of concern released today by both MFA and TGS. END COMMENT.

15. (U) BAGHDAD MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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